Nixon Hit Taxpayers for Petty Bills

By Jack Anderson

President Nixon's people tried to stick the taxpayers, apparently, for every possible petty bill at his estate in San Clemente, Calif., and Key Biscayne, Fla.

We have gone through a stack of bills and memos, never intended to be read outside the presidential circle. These show the taxpayers were charged for everything from stamping his golf tees with the presidential logo to furnishing his private San Clemente restroom with his favorite soap.

The usual explanation out of the White House has been that the government pays for renovations involving the President's security. The documents in our possession, however, show that the taxpayers were soaked for dozens of improvements never requested by the Secret Service.

This has also been established by Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) after a thorough investigation by his House Government Operations subcommittee.

The President apparently complained, for example, about the fireplace smoking in his den. The problem was turned over to his attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, who squawked to the contractor.

Warren B. Sturtevant, the contractor, hustled over to the San Clemente retreat and personally lit fires in the presidential fireplace, he reported, "on January 4th, 1971, the day before the President arrived and again on January 18th, after he had left. Both times the fireplace worked properly.

"I also understand that there were only two occasions out of about 10 possible times used where there was a smoking problem. My conclusion is that on the two occasions when the fireplace did smoke there must have been a different wind condition that caused a down draft." He recommended installing an exhaust fan.

The Secret Service at first resisted paying for the fan until Kalmbach's secretary, Marilyn Parent, had a meaningful talk with the agent in charge. She reported afterward to Sturtevant:

"Ken Iacovone informed me that SS would pay for the installation of the fireplace fan after I informed him that it definitely was placed for security purposes and how would he like it if you know who was asphyxiated because there was a certain wind condition which caused the draft to come downwards and caused the smoke to come into the room. He finally agreed with me." Cost to the taxpayers: $388.78.

• The Secret Service was also persuaded to restore Pat Nixon's favorite gazebo, although it had been rejected as a security outpost. The First Lady's social secretary, Constance Stuart, explained the problem in a February 15, 1971, memo to Mrs. Nixon.

"I've looked into the matter of the restoration of the gazebo at San Clemente," Ms. Stuart reported. "The gazebo in question is the one closest to the ocean overlooking the point and it evidently is in sad need of repair.

"The Secret Service will not be taking this gazebo over as one of the posts. They would like to place some small electronic scaning (sic) devices in an already existing cabinet. . .

"The gazebo would be restored to its original condition. . . I have been assured this work would be done in good taste and that the ultimate result would be as close to the original as possible."

The First Lady scratched an "OK" to this proposal and Ms. Stuart referred it to the General Service Administration's special projects officer, John F. Galuardi.

An earlier June 30, 1969, report to the White House on the San Clemente complex states: "Mr. Galuardi has already informed you that he would have a carpenter, electrician, plumber, and an air conditioning-refrigeration mechanic on hand at all times, with a total force of twenty various craftsmen available on call. These people will wear the regular GSA green uniform.

"He has also made plans to have a day maid in a white uniform and a sufficient number of cleaners in grey uniform and black bow tie to furnish cleaning on a 24-hour basis. Linen towels, the preferred soap, and Scott toilet tissue will be provided in the President's restroom. . .

"Arrangements have also been made for a florist to provide freshly cut flowers daily in all offices of the Administration Building." According to the financial statements, the taxpayers have laid out $4,900 for cut flowers and plants. Of this, $581 was spent on flowers for the President's residence.

At Key Biscayne, the taxpayers have paid for fixtures in the homes not only of the President but also his friend, Bebe Rebozo, next door. One work sheet calls for a "booster transformer" for "the existing kitchen . . . and for the existing air conditioning and Sauna Bath" at the Rebozo residence.

Special helipad and docking equipment was also requested by the Secret Service for the Coco Lobo, a boat owned by Rebozo.

A White House spokesman complained that the documents were part of a "partisan, unethical" campaign to embarrass the President. The spokesman said that the Secret Service had gone ahead with plans to renovate the San Clemente gazebo before Mrs. Nixon was consulted.

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